Title: Critically Analyzing Risk
Age/Grade: 11th grade
Length: 45 minutes

In this lesson, students will:

- Improve their understanding of the classification of risks online.
- Analyze what a risk is online and the ways it might impact themselves and others.
- Reflect on strategies that can minimize their own online risk-taking and the potential for risks to be presented to them.

Overview:

During a time where young people are spending a large quantity of time in the online setting, whether it be on social media or multiplayer video games, it is imperative for teens to be able to understand the impact that their online behavior potentially has on them as well as on others. The relationship this generation has with the internet has many positive implications including increased technical knowledge, as well as an expanded ability to form prosocial relationships, however there are also many potentially unhealthy ways that teens can have a relationship with the online world. This lesson will help students both identify these positive ways they can interact with the internet as well as identify potentially risky situations they might encounter online in order to bolster their online health and overall safety in online settings. By critically analyzing online situations, it will make the students reflect on their own decision-making and behaviors that might not just impact them, but others as well.

This lesson seeks to address to following questions:

- What are the benefits and consequences of the apps we are using?
- What risks are we taking online and how are we reacting to those presented to us?
- What is my role online in keeping myself and others safe?
- What makes up a "risk" and how might two of the same risks be classified differently?
- How can I be safely reacting to online risky situations?

Materials:

Paper/Pencil
Premade slides & Projector
Whiteboard to write risk scale on
Pre-made post-it notes/cards with online scenarios on them.

Critical Reflection of Risk

8-mintues

Start the lesson with introducing yourself and why you are there. You are an expert on social media and online safety and you want to simply have a conversation with the students about these topics. You do not want to bore them or lecture them – but rather allow them to bring the lesson wherever they are more interested to go.

Now handout a piece of paper to the students and ask them to split the page in half. Start by going around the room and asking the students to choose one app or platform (gaming to be included) that they want to focus on. It is okay if multiple students choose the same one, however you want there to be a variety of options.

Once the students have all chosen, ask them to write that across the top of their paper. Then follow that up by asking them to split the page in two by drawing a line down the center. On the left side of the page you want them to write down a list of positive, beneficial things about their time and experience on that app or platform. Give them a couple of minutes to do this.

After this, tell them on the right side of the paper to write down negative or risky situations that can arise on that platform or app – whether they have experienced them or not.

Once they are complete, go around the room and ask each student to share a little bit of their lists. You can track these on the board as they respond.

What you want to achieve in this opening activity is for the students to reflect on their time online – what are they identifying as risky? Are there any examples of things that they identify as a benefit but you might view as a risk? Reflect on these responses by asking the students whether they understand what makes something "a risk" and what doesn't?

Content vs. Contact vs. Conduct

5-minutes

Next, take the previous activity and grow on the discussion by introducing the idea of a "contact", "content", and "conduct" risk. Ask the students whether they believe they know the difference. Allow for the students to respond and take a moment to hear their thoughts.

A content risk is something that we might come across online, possible indirectly or by accident, that poses a risk to us. These types of risks aren't necessarily directly meant for us, or aren't targeted at you specifically, but they are a piece of online material that poses a threat (big or small) that can harm you.

A contact risk is something where someone is communicating with you (or someone else) to take part in unhealthy, unsafe, and dangerous situations. These risks are typically presented as two or more people communicating online and one of the people has a malicious intent.

A conduct risk is when we behave in a certain way that contributes to the risky and unsafe situations online. You are conducting yourself in a certain way that contributes to creating or participating in developing a "content risk" or a "contact risk".

Once you have completed this explanation, now ask the students if they think they'd be able to identify these if they were given examples? Put this to the test, with a couple of quick examples and ask the students which risk type they are.
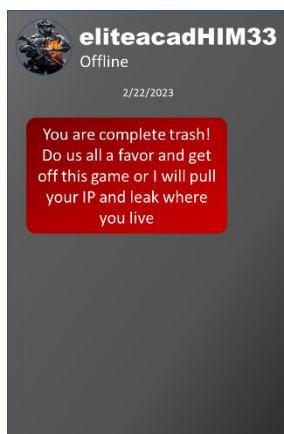
Example 1: You come across a photo on Instagram that makes fun of one of a teammate because of his race.

What type of risk is this to us? (content)

Example 2: You see a trend on TikTok about "posting the sneakiest pic you've ever taken", and you post someone in your school eating lunch.

What type of risk is this? (Conduct)

Example 3: You are gaming and receive a message from someone saying they are going to pull your IP and leak your address online.

What type of risk is this? (Contact)

Evaluating Risky Activities

20-minutes

Next, you want to engage the students in an activity that expands on their growing understanding to the type of risks online but now also have them be analyzing the level of risk that certain situations may pose online.

Go to the white board and draw a line similar to the one below:

No Risk   Significant
At All   Risk

Once this is drawn, explain you have a series of situations that might happen online and you want to have a discussion about them. Each situation is unique and you are going to hand them out and have the students place them along the risk line. Once they place them along the risk line, you want to have a discussion about that risk, the potential harm it can have, and all the reasons it presents potential risk to them or others online. Below is the list of risks:

Content Risks

1. You come across a TikTok with racist language.
   a. The more often we see this content, the more comfortable we are with its message/language that is uses.
2. You check your friend's Instagram story and see a photo of another classmate that said "don't trust these unamerican rats"
   a. More hate-based talk. Explain here how this can be an example of stereotypes growing into prejudice, and eventually discrimination. Explain those terms.
3. Trying to find the latest dieting tips, you start looking at posts online that suggest not eating to lose weight fast, you begin to repeatedly see similar content encouraging this weight loss strategy .
   a. What harm can this have on us? What messages does it present to us or others?
4. You start following an Instagram account directly making fun of someone at your school.
   a. What is the balance between standing up for someone and not wanting to get involved? Are there ways we can get involved without them knowing?
5. You see that two of your close friends are Venmoing one another with different titles of the activities they're doing when you aren't with them one day.
   a. This might not be traditionally risky, but how can it make someone feel? How do we cope with that situation?
6. Someone posts a story saying "click the link in my bio if you want to learn to get rich fast".
   a. What is at-risk in these scenarios? What might be another way this comes across to you?
7. You comment on Reddit posts with a screenname, so nobody knows who you are.
   a. Is not using your name online a good thing or a bad thing?

Contact Risks

1. Someone you aren't friends with, but know from school, sends you a Snapchat with unsolicited sexual content.
   a. Talk about how we might safely react to these situations online and further the discussion about consent online more generally.
2. Someone you've been talking to online tries to convince you that no one understands you like they do and that your friends don't care about you.
   a. That is trying to be done here? Talk about how isolation is a tactic done by people online trying to harm you in some form or another.
3. You have a close friend that keeps sending you posts that you find depressing and other very upsetting content.
   a. What is emotional online health? How can we optimize it?
4. Someone on Reddit DMs you saying they see you posting a lot and agrees with a lot of what you have to say and asks if you want to chat.
   a. At what point would this situation turn from not a risk to a risk? Talk through the situation with the group.
5. Your friend invites you to join a private Instagram that rates your classmates' "cringeness" with each post.
   a. Would this be happening offline? It is less bad since it is private and most people won't see? How might this change the way people act toward those posted?

Conduct Risks

1. You post a YouTube video titled "10 Reasons Why Kanye is Right" on Reddit.
   a. What risk is this putting others in? How might it pose a risk to them and how does it make you look in posting it?
2. You join a Discord server for sharing memes and it doesn't have anyone you know on it.
   a. What would have to happen for this situation to get more unsafe?
3. You DM your friend on Instagram a link to a website selling discount products.
   a. Benign but can be very risky to people's informational safety.
4. You post a video of your friend that they didn't know you took and you found it hilarious.
   a. What is an example of something that is risk? What about something you think is not a problem? What are the rules of consent online when posting others?
5. You start screaming at someone in a gaming lobby you do not know, making fun of their gameplay, using discriminatory language.
   a. You might not be seeing this person, or know what they look like, but you are still doing this – why? How often is this happening online? What does the language you use do to others, whether they are directly victimized by it or not?

Some of the post-it notes are less risky (or not risky at all) than others, and that is okay. The point of the activity is for the students to analyze situations online that might pose a certain risk to them or their classmates. Below some of the examples above are follow-up questions or points

you want to make sure the students recognize as being a part of the unsafe nature of those situations.

Concluding

3-5 minutes

Since the previous activity will take up most of the lesson, close the lesson by discussing some of the points that were raised relating to action. No matter if something is a content, contact, or conduct risk, we should be taking action. Pose the final questions as being what we should be asking ourselves each time we are online:

- Is this negatively harming me in any way?
- Could this be harming someone else if they see, read, or come across this?
- Would I be doing this offline to someone face-to-face?

If your answer to any of these questions is YES, then I want us to take a second look at the choice we are making.